Hughes Wanted Link To CIA, Maheu Says

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LOS ANGELES, May 16 (UPI) — Howard Hughes wanted his business to become a front for the CIA to give him leverage with federal regulatory agencies, a former top Hughes executive has testified in federal court.

Robert A. Maheu, a former FBI agent who has testified he was involved with the CIA while working for Hughes, said he refused to help Hughes accomplish the linkup.

Maheu testified Wednesday in his $17.5 million libel suit against Hughes for the billionaire's statement that Maheu was fired as head of the Hughes Nevada empire because "he stole me blind."

Maheu has spent the week detailing for the jury the unusual nature of his work for Hughes, for which he was paid $500,000 a year.

Hughes learned of Maheu's links to the CIA in 1960 or early 1961, Maheu testified, when he had to spend a lot of time in Miami "on a very sensitive assignment for a government intelligence agency."

Hughes was happy to learn that one of his top aides was involved with the CIA, and "he encouraged me to continue on with the assignment and any other work that might be required of me in future years," Maheu said.

Eight years later, Maheu said, "Mr. Hughes asked me if I could try to make some kind of arrangement with the CIA whereby some part of the Hughes Tool Co. could become a front for the intelligence agency.

"He pointed out that if he ever became involved with the government—with a regulatory body or investigative agency—he thought it would bery beneficial to him . . .

"I told him I couldn't believe what he was telling me and under no circumstances would I assist him in such an endeavor."